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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF RED CROSS

IN EAST TIMOR

ICRC SURVEY IN EAST TIMOR - 1979

In April, 1979, some ICRC delegates were permitted to visit East Timor. In a preliminary survey, they found that "tens of thousands of people displaced by military operations were facing starvation unless aid was brought to them rapidly, a situation aggravated by the absence of any medical service."(1)

Following this preliminary visit, ICRC and IRC together programmed a joint operation to assist some of the above-mentioned Timorese over a six-month period. A second, more detailed survey was conducted in late July. The aim of the survey was "to select, by village, the 50,000 most destitute refugees and displaced persons" in East Timor. (2)

Two ICRC representatives - a relief specialist and medical delegate,(3) accompanied by IRC representatives, visited 13 villages or camps (named as Urato-Lari, Iliomar, Luro, Abafala, Seical, Ostico, Cassa, Zumalia, Hatolia, Fatubessi, Natarbora, Lacrubar and Dilor) in which there were 75,230 people.(4) All travel was by helicopter hired at ICRC expense. (For village/camp locations, see map.)

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey found that the people in areas visited were in an extremely desperate situation:-

The ICRC delegates estimated that 60,000 people were "in a state of alarming malnutrition, among them some 20,000 dying of hunger and 5,000 in need of specific medical treatment."(5) Other reports from the ICRC have described the food and medical situation of 50 - 60,000 people as "extremely alarming" (6) and the situation of about 20,000 displaced persons, some of whom are suffering from Marasmus, as "calamitous". (7)

THE RELIEF PROGRAMME

The agreement between ICRC and IRC for a six-month joint relief operation in East Timor includes the following details:-

- The operation will be under Indonesian Red Cross auspices, with material and technical support from the ICRC.

- The presence in East Timor of three ICRC delegates (doctor, nurse and relief specialist) who will

  (a) visit camps and villages chosen for the relief operation;
  (b) supervise food distributions to about 60,000 people;
  (c) "keep track of the medical situation" and implement a para-medical training programme with the IRC.

- Foodstuffs etc. to be distributed to 60,000 people for 6 months are estimated as follows:-

Maize	-	1800 tonnes	Vegetable Oil	-	216 tonnes
Rice	-	360 "	Milk Powder	-	270 "
Beans	-	1080 "	Protein biscuits	-	180 "

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Sugar	108 tonnes	Soap	42 tonnes
Salt	108 "	Blankets	60,000 pieces

At the insistence of the Indonesian Government, all food aid shipped from other countries such as Australia, must first go to Jakarta rather than direct to Dili. Following ICRC-funded shipment from Jakarta to Dili, supplies will be stored at 3 administrative centres - Baucau, Ainaro and Maubisse (see map). All transport to the interior will be by helicopter, which, as the ICRC budget outline shows, is very expensive and accounts for half the expenses of the 6-month programme.

Budget estimates of the relief operation are as follows:-

	Swiss Francs	Aust. Dollars	%
Food, blankets, etc. (as shown above)	5,207,300	2,823,910	41%
Transport Jakarta - Dili, Insurance, warehouse, rent ...	501,900	272,180	4%
Drugs/medical equipment	100,000	54,230	<1%
Vehicles, spare parts, transport Jakarta - Dili	213,600	115,830	<2%
ICRC admin. and personnel expenses (includes July '79 survey expenses	398,400	216,050	3%
IRC admin. and personnel expenses (28 medical & 39 admin/relief personnel).....	185,200	100,430	1.5%
Helicopters (2) for transport (inc. ferry, hire, maintenance)	6,239,000	3,383,400	49%
	12,845,400	6,966,030	

(As of August 21st, 1979, the following pledges/contributions had been made:-

Indonesian Red Cross: 300 tonnes of rice (A$81,900)
Australian Government: 90 " " vegetable oil (A$73,200)
" " 25 " " protein biscuits (A$67,800)
U.S. Government cash grant: A$ 894,800 -

the total of which represents only 16% of the estimated requirements.)

- In the light of (as yet, undisputed) charges in the ACFOA report of the misuse of aid chanelled into East Timor via the IRC, supervision of the ICRC programme is clearly an important area. According to the ICRC:

* they have assurances from IRC that all Red Cross expenditures will be subject to audit;

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* the ICRC relief delegate has access to the books/accounts;

* disbursements above a certain sum must be approved by both IRC and ICRC.

* a representative of the auditing firm which checks ICRC accounts in Geneva will be allowed to go to Jakarta to audit the Timor operation account there.

* ICRC delegates in Timor are empowered to check the arrival of foodstuffs in Timor.

SOURCES/FOOTNOTES

(1) ICRC Communication to National Red Cross Agencies, 21st August, 1979. (Details of the proposed ICRC operation have been sent to Red Cross Societies and Governments of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, U.S.A. and the E.E.C. as part of an appeal for funds).

(2) Private communication from Australian Government source, 6th July, 1979.

(3) In early July, before the survey had been conducted, it was expected that the ICRC personnel to be involved in the Timor operation would be a Mr. Neukomm (Swiss, ICRC Relief expert), Dr. Grellety (French and Mrs. Grellety (a qualified nurse). We have no confirmation of these details.

(4) ICRC Communication, 21st August, 1979. Without confirmation of the location of these place-names, we have assumed the following for the purposes of this report:

"Urato-Lari" is Uato-Lari (and that this is the former Portuguese administration post near the south coast at 8°47' S. rather than the small hamlet of the same name near Baucau at 8°35' S. 126°20' E.).

"Zumalia" should read Zumalai; "Lacrubar" should read Laclubar. On our map, we are not confident of our placement of the name "Natarbora".

(5) ICRC Communication, 21st August, 1979.

(6) ICRC Telex "Appeal for East Timor", 17th August, 1979.

(7) ICRC Communication, 9th August, 1979. Marasmus is a dangerous wasting of the body through malnutrition.

(8) Operation details are provided in the ICRC Communication of 21st August, 1979.

COMMENTS

Welcome as the ICRC-sponsored aid programme is, the following comments show that the programme is a very limited one which will not meet the needs in East Timor today:

Desperate Situation in East Timor

(1) The situation in East Timor - certainly those parts visited by the ICRC delegates - is desperate. Anyone familiar with the usually low-key statements of the ICRC will note the very strongly-worded description of conditions in those villages and camps in East Timor. These descriptions confirm the picture given in the ACFOA report in July and are consistent with descriptions contained in recent letters from East Timor.

ICRC did not see everything in East Timor

(2) Given that the ICRC went to East Timor to find the "50,000 most destitute persons" in East Timor and have found that 60,000 out of 75,000 people they have visited in Indonesian-controlled camps and villages are in such condition, one must ask what is the situation in other parts of the territory.

Since late last year, there has been a flow of reports of very poor conditions at Ermera, Remexio and Metinaro where thousands of Timorese are camped. A letter from Dili (dated June 1979) told of people "slowly dying in the villages of Remexio, Turiscai, Maubara, Betano and Suro. It appears that ICRC has not visited any of these areas.

ICRC Relief Programme limited in size, scope, duration

(3) Welcome as the food will be to the East Timorese who will receive it, the ICRC - IRC programme is very limited in size, scope and duration. It is also very late in coming - though this is not the fault of the ICRC.

Although the situation is far worse now than it was in 1975, the ICRC operation in East Timor during the time of the short FRETILIN administration was more extensive.

At that time, the ICRC programme involved:

- the service of 4 ICRC doctors;
- use of Dili hospital;
- provision of surgical, obstetric and paediatric services;
- direction of a blood collection programme;
- 24 hour/day casualty service;
- tracing work;
- organisation of supply of basic drugs for East Timor;
- distribution of emergency relief to the civilian population: food, clothes, etc.
- free access to all prisoners (including their hospitalization where necessary).

The actual ICRC presence is very small and will cease after six months. It would appear that the major role of the ICRC Relief Specialist will be to attempt to ensure that the distribution of food in East Timor occurs as planned. Whether one person can ensure this remains to be seen. The medical part of the operation is clearly a very minor aspect - accounting for less than 1% of the programme budget.

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Mainly an Indonesian Red Cross Programme

(4) The operation is mainly an IRC operation with ICRC supervision. Despite positive reports of IRC disaster relief capabilities, serious questions have been raised about its operation in East Timor (see ACFOA report). That the ICRC presence is very small is not surprising. The Indonesian Government has maintained a policy of having aid to East Timor channelled through IRC and keeping foreign aid personnel out of the territory (the Catholic Relief Service programme, about which little is known yet, will involve only Indonesian personnel).

In addition to maintaining a blockade on the flow of information to the outside world, this policy may also reflect a wish by the Indonesian Government to be seen by the East Timorese as the main source of humanitarian aid. In reference to aid channelled through the Catholic Church in Timor, two Canadian Embassy officials were told in April, 1979 by a regional military official, Colonel Kalange, that "it would be preferable for the people to look mainly toward the Indonesian Government as their prime benefactor".

When ICRC leaves, what.....?

(5) What will happen at the end of the six-month period is unclear. If Timorese are forced to remain in these camps/villages, then this food aid programme will be of limited value. Many lives will be saved, but the people will still be dependent on outside supplies - the provision of which cannot be guaranteed.

Adequate Safeguards for Aid?

(6) Provision in the agreement for ensuring the intended disbursement of the aid appear to cover all areas except the most important one - that covering what actually happens 'on the ground' in East Timor.

ICRC Programme not enough for East Timor

(7) The humanitarian needs in Indonesian-controlled areas of East Timor are great. They will not be covered by the ICRC programme or the CRS programme. Details of the CRS programme are not yet available. Since the publication of the ACFOA report, we have been advised by an official source in Jakarta that:

"the first phase of the CRS programme - now under way - amounts to a little more than $U.S.700,000. The programme may be carried out in three or four phases. The CRS programme should not be described as a Church programme. CRS is just functioning as a link between the Indonesian Army and USAID." (23rd August, 1979)

ICRC not able to fulfil normal role

(8) It should be noted that the current programme involves no prison visitation or tracing work - although both are badly needed in East Timor.

Prison Visitation

It has been noted with considerable concern that ICRC will not be carrying out one of its traditional works, namely prison

visitation, during its current operation in East Timor.

The Indonesian military administration in East Timor has a considerable number of prisons (approximately 40) in East Timor where, it is believed, many Timorese are detained as prisoners of war or political prisoners.

There are four (4) prisons in Dili:

i. The Military Police Prison (Penjara Polisi Militer) in Vila Verde.

ii. The Intelligence Prison (Penjara Assisten Satu Intelijen) in Farol.

iii. The Army Prison (Penjara Resimen Para-Komando Angkatan Darat (RPKAD) in Colmera.

iv. The Military Police Prison of Comarca in Balide: the main gaol.

In addition, there are three (3) prisons in each of the 12 administrative centres (Kabupaten) outside Dili:

i. Military Police Prison.

ii. Army Prison (Penjara Komando Distrik Militer: KODIM)/

iii. P.T.P. Prison (Logistics).

Little is known about the numbers of detainees in these prisons or their condition. There have been, however, enough disturbing reports over the years 1976 - 1979 (referring to, inter alia, torture and brainwashing) to justify a concern that Geneva Conventions are not being observed.

In regard to the Geneva Conventions, ICRC should also be permitted to investigate claims of executions without trial.

Executions without Trial

About July, 1979, the Indonesian Armed Forces executed a Timorese family at Fahi-Nehan (between Same and Alas) in East Timor.

The family involved (mother, father and five teenage children) were executed without trial, apparently a month or two after surrendering. Their 'crime' was that they were related by marriage to the FRETILIN leader Rogerio Lobato. One of the children was in fact his wife.

Prior to their death, the family had spent some years in the mountains fleeing from Indonesian army activity. They were not fighting. During that time two of the children died of hunger and disease. One, Avelino, was 9 years old; the other, Maria Jose, was 6.

The father was a trained nurse. The mother was a former member of the Portuguese Red Cross.

Those executed were:

Alexandrina Amelia Augusta Pires Leite (47, mother)
Felisberto Gouveia Leite (45, father)

Children

Maria Auxiliadora Filomena Pires Leite (17, Lobato's wife)
Dulce Maria Pires Leite (15)
Rui Manuel Baptista Pires Leite and
Maria de Fatima Baptista Pires Leite (twins, 12)
and
Aurea Fontes Gusmao (16, foster-child).

Missing Persons

Reports and letters from East Timor make frequent references to the 'disappearance'of people. Timorese outside East Timor assume that 'disappearance' means death.

> "Many people have already disappeared..... Now many widows of the recently disappeared walk around in a very disturbed state, as thin as skeletons". (July 14th, 1979)

This is not a recent development. People who surrendered under the Presidential Amnesty which expired on 31st December, 1977, have also disappeared.

The general picture appears to be that FRETILIN leadership people and their relatives (to the third generation, according to one report), able-bodied literate males coming down from the mountains to surrender, and individuals from the elite, are being purged (though there are exceptions to this general pattern).

In at least some cases people have disappeared after surrendering and being 'set free'.

The following are a few names which fall into this general category:

Joao Andrade	Sargento Sarmento
Agostinho Tilman	Leopoldo Heraldo Joaquim
Joao Bosco Quintao	Joao Bosco Soares
Meno Alves	Eduardo Dos Anjos
Manecas Exposto	Jose Alexandre Gusmao
Juvenal Inacio	Carlos Cesar Correia
Sebastiao Montalvao	Anibal de Araujo
Cornelio Esposto	Alarico Fernandes

Political aspects of aid to East Timor

(9) All the above comments do not take account of unavoidable political aspects of humanitarian aid to Indonesian-controlled areas of East Timor.

The ACFOA Report raised clearly for the first time the Indonesian military strategy of concentrating people in camps to separate the population from FRETILIN. This claim has been confirmed recently by a Catholic Priest in Portugal who recently got out of East Timor. (Canberra Times, 22/8/79) and in letters from East Timor. The movement of people into such camps began in

1977 but reached a peak in the latter half of 1978. *Indonesian Government appeals for humanitarian aid have been based on the existence of these camps.* The concentration of East Timorese by the thousands is unknown in East Timor. Before the invasion, people lived in small hamlets spread throughout the territory. With the exception of Dili and Baucau, there were no large "towns" as we in Australia understand them. Recent letters from East Timor report that people in the camps are not permitted to leave the camps; no food cultivation is permitted.

There can be no real doubt that the provision of aid to these camps (and the ICRC operation is doing exactly this) is clearly aid to the Indonesian military strategy. Aid to people in these camps without attempting to demand the right of the people there to return to their land simply condemns the East Timorese to continued dependence on outside supplies.

With respect to the military aspects of life in East Timor, the following point should also be considered. While military encounters have reduced considerably in scale this year, there appear to be military operations in some parts of the territory. ICRC and other aid agencies should examine the possibilities of aid to areas of East Timor not controlled by the Indonesian Military.

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4/10/79.